THE DKTK Partner Site Freiburg

Call for Projects 2021- 2025

General information

Deadline for submission: **November 1st, 2020.**
Submit application form to: a.dost@dkfz-heidelberg.de

DKTK-FREIBURG 2021 – 2025

The German Cancer Consortium (Deutsches Konsortium Translationale Krebsforschung, DKTK) is a joint initiative involving the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), participating German states, the German Cancer Aid (Deutsche Krebshilfe, DKH) and the German Cancer Research Center (Deutsches Krebsforschungszentrum, DKFZ). DKTK has been established in October 2012 as one of six German Health Research Centers (Deutsche Zentren der Gesundheitsforschung, DZG).

Within DKTK, cancer researchers and oncologists collaborate closely at eight University Medical Centers across Germany. The overarching aim of DKTK is to speed up transfer of new scientific findings from basic research to novel diagnostic and therapeutic approaches in cancer care.

The third funding period of DKTK is going to start in 2021. In the next five years, the **goal of DKTK-Freiburg is to sharpen our research focus and to increase our visibility**. All DKTK-partner sites specified their strategy and put focus themes at the centre of their DKTK research. The local activities should strengthen the DKTK network and aim on creating synergistic and innovative research projects in translational oncology.

RESEARCH FOCUS DKTK-FREIBURG 2021 AND BEYOND

By 2021, most scientific activities of DKTK Freiburg will be performed in three **focus areas**:

Focus area 1: Epigenetic & Oncogenic Signaling

Epigenetic & Oncogenic Signalling are key pathways disturbed by mutations in liquid as well as solid cancer. The research strategy is to enhance and to apply the molecular understanding of epigenetics and kinase signalling to devise novel intervention strategies. These will rely on (the combination of) identification, development and pre-clinical testing of innovative drug candidates to direct the application in patient cohorts. Specific topics include, but are not restricted to: DNA and histone modifications, readers of chromatin modifications, intracellular kinase pathways, immunomodulation and stem-cell based therapies.

Focus area 2: Imaging, Biomarker Identification & Radiation Therapy

Imaging, Biomarker Identification & Radiation Therapy are key research areas for the development of individualized oncology and targeted treatment strategies. Based on innovative and established structures, preclinical research has a strong focus on clinical translation. Early clinical trials will be conducted. The Research Focus 2 aims at the identification of novel molecular probes for imaging and therapy in the field of Nuclear Medicine and Radiation Oncology as well as the development of future imaging techniques. Specific topics include Innovative Radiopharmaceuticals and Theranostics, Novel Imaging Biomarkers, Radiation Therapies (including high-precision technologies and particle therapy), Molecular Imaging in Oncology and Innovative technologies in MRI.

Focus area 3: Functional & Translational Genomics

Research Focus 3 "Functional & Translational Genomics" aims at understanding the cancer genome for patient stratification and personalized targeted treatment. The spectrum of approaches in this area will range from the basic understanding of the impact of mutations on tumor development and drug response to clinical trials for targeted therapies based on molecular aberrations. Specific topics include Personalized Oncology, Non-canonical Mutations, Molecular Patient Stratification for Targeted Therapy, Pipeline for Clinical Decision Support, Genetic Biomarker Discovery & Validation for Targeted Therapy, Functional Tumor Genomics and RNA-Protein-Complexes in Cancer.

Focus 1
Epigenetics & Oncogenic Signaling

DKTK Prof. Marc Timmers

Topics:
- DNA (de)methylation pathways
- Histone modification pathways (acetylation and methylation)
- Inhibition of chromatin readers
- Oncogenic and metabolic kinase signaling
- Immunosignaling in cancer
- Stem cell-based therapies

Focus 2
Imaging & Radiation Therapy

DKTK Prof. Matthias Eder

Topics:
- Innovative radiopharmaceuticals and theranostics
- Novel imaging biomarkers
- Radiation therapies: including high-precision technologies and particle therapy
- Molecular Imaging in oncology
- Innovative technologies in MRI

Focus 3
Functional & Translational Genomics
- Understanding the Cancer Genome for Patient Stratification -

DKTK associated Prof. Melanie Börries
DKTK associated Prof. Sven Diederichs

Topics:
- Personalized oncology
- Non-canonical mutations
- Molecular patient stratification for targeted therapy
- Pipeline for clinical decision support
- Genetic biomarker discovery & validation for targeted therapy
- Functional tumor genomics
- RNA-protein-complexes in cancer

The focus areas are coordinated by DKTK and DKTK associated professors. To establish scientific exchange and networking within each focus area, *DKTK Freiburg Scientific Committees* have been established.

OBJECTIVES OF FUNDING ROUND

From 2021 on an important part of the will be spend in competitive calls (aimed at enhancing the translational and clinical profile of DKTK-Freiburg). The applications must fit into one of the three research focus areas described above and provide a clear translational and clinical perspective as indicated by deliverables in the proposal (e.g. translational development milestones, clinical trials, patent applications). Projects solely aimed at enhancing the basic knowledge of cancer-relevant processes will receive a low priority. We are looking for innovative ideas and projects that enrich these focus topics and invite translational researchers and clinician scientists in Freiburg to apply for the funding in the field of translational cancer research.

Networking opportunities or already established collaborations within DKTK especially with other partner sites should be specifically mentioned in the application. The funding is intended to foster starting or to start new projects as well as new or ongoing clinical trials and should ideally be leveraged by further applications for third party funding to support *e.g.* a clinical study emanating from the DKTK project applied for under this call.

The total available budget for all projects in the three focus areas is approx. € 1.3 M. per year. Estimated funds for a single application should be between € 100.000-200.000 per year. Funding will be initially granted for three years with the possibility of two years extension.

ELIGIBILITY

The call is open to researchers and clinicians from **member departments of the Comprehensive Cancer Center Freiburg – CCCF** (Medical Center – University of Freiburg) **and local DKTK scientists (DKTK School of Oncology fellows, DKTK investigators[1], DKTK Faculty members[2]),** working in the field of translational cancer research, who have already or intend to set up their own research group.

The call is open to junior and advanced scientists from the postdoctoral level onwards, but excluding W3 professors acting as department heads (*W3 Professur mit Leitungsfunktion*) or equivalent.

Young scientists are especially encouraged to apply. For junior scientists, the evaluation will emphasize the quality of the proposal over the track record in publications and clinical trials. Postdoctoral fellows without an independent group can apply for their own position.

DKTK Faculty members or DKTK Investigators from other DKTK partner sites and non-DKTK researchers may contribute to the outlined project as collaborators, but they cannot apply for DKTK funding by the partner site Freiburg. It is recommended to mention the collaboration with DKTK faculty or investigators in the application form.

[1] Scientists who make a significant contribution to the DKTK program in a significant amount of their working time.

[2] In addition to scientific contributions, DKTK faculty members take coordinative tasks in certain research programs, themes or platforms at local and / or inter-site level or serve as key interfaces to the clinic.

APPLICATION

A full application includes the following documents:

- Filled application form (https://www.uniklinik-freiburg.de/cccf/forschung/dktk.html)
- Curriculum vitae of the applicant (max. 2 pages)
- List of selected publications (not older than 10 years, max. 10 publications, sorted for original articles as first or last author, as corresponding author, other publications)
- List of third party funding (if applicable)
- List of clinical trials (if applicable)
- List of patents (if applicable)

Please submit your application until November 1st, 2020 to a.dost@dkfz-heidelberg.de

Applicants whose project has been successfully evaluated will be invited to give an oral presentation at a meeting of the DKTK Freiburg Scientific Committees **in November 2020.**
Final decisions on funding of the projects will be taken in a joint meeting of the DKTK Freiburg Scientific committees headed by the DKTK-Freiburg spokesperson. In the final selection of the projects, degressive financing of the projects can be decided.

Start and duration of funding:
Expected project start: **January 1st, 2021**

Funds may be requested for a period of initially **three years.** There is the possibility of extending the projects for **two more years** after a successful evaluation by the DKTK Freiburg Scientific Committees.
The Scientific Advisory Board of the DKTK will evaluate the new DKTK strategy at the end of 2021. If strategy adjustments are required, project adjustments might be necessary.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Selection for funding by the DKTK Freiburg Scientific Committees will be based on the following evaluation criteria:

- Scientific excellence and feasibility of the proposed project
- Scientific and/or clinical excellence of the applicant
- Translational significance and potential to develop into a clinical trial
- Clinical implementation
- Pertinence to the three scientific foci and relevance for the scientific strategy of DKTK Freiburg
- Added value by interactions within DKTK Freiburg and especially with other DKTK partner sites
- Timeline for the start of the project: Formal requirements (e.g. regulatory permissions, access to biomaterials and/or clinical data) should be fulfilled by the project start
- Efficient use of funds

NOTES TO DKTK BUDGET

The DKTK supports translational research with personnel, consumables and investments. The institutional funding of the DKTK is administered via the DKFZ in Heidelberg. The budget is allocated annually (a transfer to the following year is not possible). The budget should be evenly distributed throughout each year.

Personnel:

- Staff working for DKTK Freiburg is employed at the DKFZ in Heidelberg (salary based on TV-L, except PhD contracts), but will work in Freiburg
- Only personnel working in the research context will be funded e.g. Technicians, Post-Docs, PhDs
- PhD students are employed at the DKFZ with a 3-year contract (extension is possible). PhD students should start and finish their doctoral thesis within the framework of the DKTK. It is not planned to finance remaining terms for a doctoral thesis that has already been started and funded by other institutions.

Consumables:

DKTK consumables are delivered to labs of the Medical Center University of Freiburg (UKF). Please note that orders to other facilities or to cooperation partners are not possible.

Investment:

The DKTK devices belong to the DKFZ. The DKTK is in charge for maintenance of these devices. In principle, inventory is available to all DKTK groups.

PUBLICATION REQUIREMENTS

As a consortium funded by the German federal government and federal states, the DKTK has an obligation to the funding bodies and the public to keep them informed of its developments in general and the topics, content, results and quality of its research activities. Scientific publications are one of the most important performance parameters in this context. The use of a standard affiliation text in publications is vital to the DKTK to fulfil its obligation as an institutional body and ensure its visibility in the research community and the domain of clinical oncology. Publications that do not mention the affiliation cannot be taken into account, when documenting DKTK's performance towards both funding bodies and review panels during evaluations. A simple mention of the DKTK in the acknowledgements – which is sufficient in the case of third-party funding – is not sufficient.

Authors should declare their affiliation to the DKTK in scientific publications by using the following standard format in English:
Institution where the author works AND German Cancer Consortium (DKTK), *optional*: partner site X, AND German Cancer Research Center (DKFZ), Heidelberg, Germany

Example:
Medical Center University of Freiburg (MCUF), Freiburg, Germany; German Cancer Consortium (DKTK), partner site Freiburg, and German Cancer Research Center (DKFZ), Heidelberg, Germany

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

For each funding year, a brief project report will be requested for the DKTK internal monitoring.

CONTACT

Please send the completed form until November 1st, 2020 to: a.dost@dkfz-heidelberg.de.

If you need further information, please contact the coordination office at DKTK Freiburg:
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